



Memorandum

TO: HONORABLE MAYOR AND
CITY COUNCIL

FROM: Del D. Borgsdorf

**SUBJECT: TRANSFER OF WIRELESS
911 CALLS**

DATE: May 28, 2004

INFORMATION

BACKGROUND

In 1998, an FCC law (FCC 94-102), was passed that mandates the states to implement the Phase II Wireless 911 System, which requires all cellular providers to send the location of the caller making a 911 call to the Public Safety Answering Point (PSAP). Currently, all telephone calls to 911 that originate from wireless or PCS type of phones within the City of San José are routed to the California Highway Patrol (CHP) for service. CHP then screens the calls and routes one call to the appropriate responding agency 911 Call Center. In January 2001, the State passed a law (AB1263) that allows local jurisdictions to assume these 911 calls with the concurrence of the State 911 Telecommunications Office and the CHP. In April 2003, the City of San José filed a letter with the State indicating our intent to take over this responsibility from the CHP, contingent on our ability to assume the availability of resources necessary to take on the additional workload this would entail. This is not a mandatory transfer of responsibility, but the City felt that our Public Safety Communications Center could provide a higher level of customer service to our citizens and thus opted to work toward accepting these calls. This letter did not have a date of commitment associated with it, so no actual date for transfer of services has been determined. Depending on the outcome of Council consideration of the establishment of a new Emergency Response Fee, the Department is currently pursuing a plan which could phase in a Fall 2004 implementation of this shift.

ANALYSIS

The Public Safety Communications Center's ability to assume wireless 911 calls falls into two categories: technical and operational.

On the technical side, several upgrades were required to City equipment, and are expected to be in place by June 2004 when the new CAD system and the State 911 fee-funded hardware and software upgrades are in full operation. These upgrades included a phone system upgrade that was funded by the State of California 911 fee. The City's CAD System upgrade included a

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mapping component which will allow for the display of the location of the wireless caller in a graphical format. This location information is then transferred with the caller's telephone number and the address of the cell site to the Communications Center for display at the call-taker's workstation. The City is eligible to receive a maximum reimbursement from the State for the mapping component of \$375,000 once wireless 911 is implemented. These two upgrades needed to be completed prior to the City's acceptance of the wireless 911 call transfer. The phone system upgrade and the mapping component will be completed and operational when the new CAD System goes live in June 2004.

Cellular companies have to perform technical adjustments to redirect wireless signals to the different 911 Call Centers. The State 911 Telecommunications Office also has to perform redirection actions before full wireless distribution is achieved. It is anticipated that the cellular companies will require four to five months to make these technical conversions. At the point the decision was made that the transfer should proceed, as the companies converted, wireless calls would be directed to the San José 911 Communications Center. It is anticipated that the earliest this could occur is after October 2004, and it is that timeline that has been assumed in constructing estimates for the costs and proceeds of the new Emergency Response Fee.

Several smaller cities in the area have already taken over answering wireless 911 at their local PSAP: Sunnyvale, Mountain View, Palo Alto, Milpitas and Campbell. San Francisco is the first large city to assume wireless 911 calls two years ago. Based on San Francisco's experience, San José estimates that the call volume could increase by 20% or 37,000 calls per year. If this level of increase was to occur, preliminary analysis indicates a need for up to seven additional call-takers (six in the Police Department and one in the Fire Department) to provide 24-hour, 7-day coverage and maintain current response time levels in both the 911 and 311 areas.

The Police Department has begun to implement various actions to provide additional resources necessary to assume wireless 911 calls during the Fall of 2004, should the decision be made to proceed. The Department currently has 8 Dispatcher vacancies. These positions have been vacant for over one year, but in anticipation of wireless 911 startup, the recruitment process has begun with a preliminary background process in place. The Department is also exploring options to fast-track the screening, hiring and training processes in order to have new staff fully trained to assume call-taking duties. In the event the training program has not been completed by full implementation, the Department will, on an interim basis, reallocate resources from lower priority services such as 311 call-taking.

The current 911 call-taking function is staffed on the average number of calls received. When the current 911 call volume exceed capacity, a 911 call automatically rolls over to the call-takers on the TRAC and 311 systems. The 911 calls continue to remain a high priority such that if call-taking staffing issues arise, the service level impact would be on lower priority services such as 311 calls. With the phased in cut-over of the wireless providers, the filled vacancies and the automatic rollover for peak call volume, the Police and Fire Departments believe they would be able to handle the start-up of wireless 911 service in San José.

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CONCLUSION

In summary, the Police Department feels that by taking on the wireless 911 answering point, we would be providing a higher level of customer service to our citizens. The Department would be ready to assume wireless 911 calls as early as the Fall of 2004. If approved, the new Emergency Response Fee would reimburse the City for the costs of the current dispatch operations, and could be used to fund those resources necessary to staff appropriately the additional volume of calls expected to result from assuming the cellular 911 functions. If the fee is not approved at this time, it is recommended that the City delay implementation until we can provide an alternate funding source for the resources that will be required to implement this new service.

The technical requirements to assume the service will be in place by June 2004 with the new CAD system and upgrades in full operation mode. Should the additional resources provided by the new fee be made available and implementation proceed, the Police and Fire Departments will continuously evaluate the impact of wireless 911 on the dispatch center workload. Any resource adjustments that would be required as a result of the wireless workload would be addressed when identified.

/s/

Del D. Borgsdorf
City Manager